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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence
17 July 1967

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

Military Incidents on the Suez Canal
and Jordanian Border Fronts

1. Serious border incidents have continued along the Suez Canal cease-fire line during the past week. Most of the clashes were probably initiated by the Egyptian forces in an effort to enhance their tarnished military reputation, but both sides accused each other of having broken the cease-fire agreements. The most serious fighting of the week broke out on 14 July and continued until a new cease-fire was accepted by both parties late on 15 July. Sporadic firing incidents also took place along the Jordan River on the 15th, but since the new Suez cease-fire no further incidents have occurred. UN observers are now scheduled to move in along the Suez Canal on both the east and west banks and will probably act as a fairly successful deterrent against further incidents.

2. After a series of comparatively minor clashes early in July, the Israelis responded to what was apparently an Egyptian provocation effort on 8 July by sending aircraft to silence Egyptian artillery on the west bank of the canal near Ras al Ushsh. On 11 July, the Israelis claim to have downed an Egyptian SU-7 jet fighter over Sinai, and the following day a naval clash off the coast of Sinai near Al Arish resulted in the destruction by Israeli naval forces of two Egyptian motor torpedo boats.

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3. The military action which began on 14 July continued intermittently until late the next day when the new cease-fire was established. The southern end of the canal was the scene of the most serious trouble on the 14th, although there were also engagements at Qantara and Ismailia. Intermittent artillery, tank, and mortar fire was directed all day against Israeli positions across from Suez town, according to the Israeli account. Five Israeli soldiers were killed before aircraft silenced the Egyptian batteries. There is no confirmation of Egyptian claims that several Israeli planes were shot down during the fray.

4. Serious incidents continued on 15 July until both sides agreed to a UN-sponsored cease-fire which went into effect at 6:00 p.m. EDT. Clashes involving artillery and aircraft occurred during the day at various points along the canal including Al Firdan, Qantara, Port Taufiq, Suez town, Kabrit, and Ismailia. Again, both sides claimed that the other had initiated the attacks. Cairo Radio stated that the Israelis opened fire on Egyptian positions across the canal in the morning and continued tank, mortar, and other fire during the day. The Egyptians claim to have prevented Israeli units from an effort to cross the canal and to have downed six Israeli planes. Cairo admits to losing three tanks and three field guns as well as one aircraft.

5. The Israeli accounts of the results of the fighting on the 15th are probably more accurate, although there is no clear evidence as to which party initiated the conflicts. An Israeli military spokesman announced on 15 July that Egyptian attacks continued at various points along the canal until approximately 4:00 p.m. EDT. The Israelis claim to have downed six Egyptian planes in the course of the fighting--three MIG-21s, two MIG-17s, and one SU-7. They also state that their forces destroyed about 15 anti-tank guns, ten anti-aircraft guns, four or five tanks, and several armored troop carriers.

6. Press reports quote an unidentified Israeli spokesman as having accused Egypt of attempting to involve ships of the Soviet naval unit now visiting Egyptian ports in the conflict.

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7. On the Jordanian front, both Jordanian and Israeli statements claim that the "enemy" initiated the series of comparatively minor military clashes which occurred along the Jordan River north of Jericho on 15 July. The Israelis have stated that the Jordanians opened fire with machine guns north of the Damia bridge in the morning and that Israeli troops on the west bank of the river returned the fire. Three shooting incidents apparently occurred during the day, and the Jordanians accuse Israel of having provoked the clash, the first since the cease-fire was established in June.

8. UN Military Observers (UNMOs) were expected to have moved into the Suez Canal area in both Egypt and the Israeli-occupied sector yesterday. The first group of observers moved toward Ismailia on the west bank of the canal on 15 July, and were to have taken over responsibilities for supervising the cease-fire line at 2:00 p.m. EDT on 16 July. Their placement has now been delayed. The east bank observers will operate out of Qantara. Details of their freedom of action are yet to be ironed out on both sides, but Cairo, after an earlier objection to direct communication between the two groups, has given permission for direct communication across the canal and withdrawn its objection to the observers' using codes.

9. The presence of the observers may act as an effective deterrent to further serious clashes in the Suez Canal area. The incidents on the 14th and 15th may well have been a last-ditch Egyptian effort to make a final face-saving gesture before the stationing of the observer force. The Israelis will probably be sufficiently conscious of the effect on world opinion to refrain from mounting any offensive movement on their own in the presence of the UN teams.

Approved For Release 2004/03/31 : CIA-RDP79T00826A002400100001-8

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